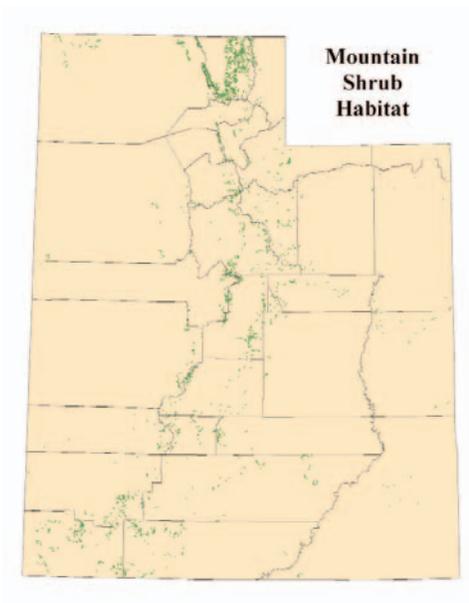


Mountain Shrub Habitat



As dry pinyon-juniper woodlands give way to cooler, higher-elevation forests, mountain shrub habitats form a transition zone. From about 3,000 feet to 9,500 feet in elevation, these shrublands are home to small trees and shrubs that provide a rich source of food and abundant cover for a wide variety of Utah's wildlife.

Mountain shrub habitats are home to plants that produce serviceberries, chokecherries, acorns and a variety of other foods that support birds. Deer and elk also depend on mountain shrub habitats for forage, and predators such as cougars often hide among the thick shrubs waiting for opportunities to take their prey. But these habitats can only support this array of wildlife as long as they remain healthy, and, increasingly, mountain shrub habitats are under stress across Utah.



Key Facts about Utah's Mountain Shrub Habitat:

Rare

Covering just over one percent of Utah's land area, mountain shrub habitats are rare.

Under Stress

Biologists believe many of Utah's mountain shrub habitats are affected by human impacts, and as a result this habitat is likely declining across the state.

Plant Life

Smaller trees and shrubs dominate the mountain shrub habitat. Plants such as cliff rose, serviceberry, chokecherry, snowberry and bigtooth maple are common in mountain shrub habitats.

Animal Life

From small creatures like the Ogden Rocky Mountainsnail to large predators like cougars, mountain shrub habitats are home to a wide variety of Utah's wildlife. Gray wolves once resided in mountain shrub, but populations of wolves are no longer found in Utah.

Species on the Edge



Mule deer

A variety of human activities have caused changes in mountain shrub habitats that have resulted in declines in wildlife species across these habitats. In all, mountain shrub habitats are home to 14 species that need conservation, including the following:

Tier One—Very High Concern
Ogden Rocky Mountainsnail

Tier Two—High Concern

Eureka, Lyrate, Brian Head and Deseret mountainsnails

Tier Three—Moderate Concern

Mule deer, desert shrew, black-throated gray warbler

What's Threatening Utah's Mountain Shrub Habitats?

Fire Cycle Alteration—Mountain shrub habitats are dependent on natural fire cycles that have been disrupted by human activities, making fires now either too frequent or too few.

Invasive Plant Species—Introduced plants are outcompeting native plants, quickly making large areas of once-productive habitat uninhabitable for many native species.

Brush Control—Brush-control activities, designed to reduce fuels for wildfires, can damage mountain shrub habitats if performed improperly.

Improper Grazing Practices—Over-grazing threatens some mountain shrub habitats.

Energy Development—The roads, well pads and other developments associated with oil and gas extraction can damage mountain shrub habitats.

Taking Action

Protecting Utah's mountain shrub habitats will require coordinated action among a variety of partners across the state.

Conservation Actions

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has identified the following key actions needed to protect mountain shrub habitats:

1. Control invasive vegetation and plant desirable plants.
2. Reintroduce natural fire patterns with prescribed burns and other methods.
3. Work with land managers to create better energy development methods, and to set aside healthy habitat when areas must be developed.
4. Increase efforts in research and monitoring for wildlife populations.
5. Ensure appropriate grazing practices are implemented.
6. Educate the public about the importance of mountain shrub habitats and how to help keep them healthy.

Conservation Partners

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

is working closely with the grazing industry, private landowners, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and private forest and mining industries to protect mountain shrub habitats.